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Pre-post Unit Assessment

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### **Unit Introduction**

This unit focuses on nationalism and imperialism from a world history lens. The unit is executed in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History class. By focusing on nationalism and imperialism on a more global scale, European actors and actions, while important, will not be the sole focus of this unit. More specifically, why and how European nationalism and imperialism affected non-European peoples and geographies will be the foundation of this unit. The central themes for the unit include the social, economic, and political features and effects of nationalism and imperialism. Chronologically, this unit focuses on the time period from the Columbian encounter to the present day. In addition to focusing on nationalism and imperialism in the historic context, the unit draws parallels between the contemporary and previous facets of imperialism. Two present day realities we'll be examining in relation to European imperialism in the 16<sup>th</sup> century European imperialism include the creation of the modern day 'other' and the nationalist movement in Africa. Here the goal is for students to be able to draw similarities between the past and the present.

Within the unit we will also be focusing on personal and group social skills. While at first glance social skills may seem disjointed from nationalism and imperialism, learning about and practicing collaborative group functioning, becoming better, more informed social agents, will help students to collectively better learn the material. Treating the classroom as a social space in addition to an academic space will facilitate a higher level of student learning. Dedicating days in this unit to "social skills workshop days" is intended to promote learning about nationalism and imperialism. Furthermore, within the unit we will be focusing on stereotyping and the creation of the modern day 'other.' By focusing on social components of imperialism and nationalism, we also have the opportunity to focus on

personal social capacities. Asking students to examine how they see others (facilitated by the unit's modern day other lessons), and how, in turn, these views impact their social interaction with others is a means for directly linking content with student's social skills. It is also important to mention my feelings regarding the connection between social studies and students' social skills; I feel social studies classes have a paramount responsibility in ensuring students are able interact in a democratic and culturally sensitive manner. My goals and instructional practices within this unit are a reflection my feelings surrounding the importance of teaching social skills in social studies classrooms.

### **Purpose of Pre-Post Assessment**

The purposes of the pre-post assessment are multiple. First, both of the pre-post assessment instruments used will work to inform my instruction. According to Stiggins (2008) "assessments are intended to inform instructional decisions" (Stiggins, 2008, p. 28). The pre- assessment tools, implemented at the outset of the unit will be especially informative to my instruction. The pre-assessment will give me an idea of any collective strengths or weaknesses in student knowledge and understanding regarding national and imperialism as well as group functioning skills. Using information from the pre-assessment, I will be able to tailor my instruction in order to better meet student's learning related needs. The pre-post assessment will also be informative to my instruction insofar as that, aligned with the backwards model of planning, I will be designing instructional methods to compliment predefined knowledge and understanding goals. The pre-post assessment paints a picture of where I want student to go in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills. I am then able to use this picture as a means of designing appropriate instruction to get them there.

A second purpose of the pre-post assessment is connected to individual student's learning progression. "They [the students are] clearly assessors of their own academic progress and they use this in compelling ways" (Stiggins, 2008, p. 31). By providing students with an opportunity to demonstrate

what they don't know and/or understand at the beginning of the unit, and then providing them the opportunity to return to the same facts and concepts at the end of the unit, students are made aware of their own learning progression. In this manner, students are given the opportunity to acknowledge their own academic successes—to learn what they learned. Using the pre-post assessment to encourage students to be self-assessors empowers students in the learning process.

Finally, the pre-post assessment also serves as a powerful tool to school, district and policy-maker officials. The pre-post assessment implemented within the unit, and assessments aligned with Washington EARLS more generally, work to document student learning. According to educational law and practice it is imperative that teachers “establish achievement standards to guide instruction in classrooms and then demand evidence of achievement to verify that students are meeting the standards” (Stiggins, 2008, p.33). Thus the pre-post assessment is important to the teacher (me), the students, and the larger educational community (Ballard High School, Seattle School District, and The Washington Board of Education).

### **Pre-Post Unit Learning Targets**

#### **Concepts:**

- **LT1:** Students will understand how imperialism impacted Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans. (GLE: History 4.3: Understands that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events).
- **LT2:** Students will understand the socio-political process of ‘othering’ as it existed during European imperialism and as it exists today. (GLE: History 4.4: Uses history to understand the present and plan for the future).

- **LT3:** Students will understand how Africa is currently connected to historic processes of imperialism. (GLE: History 4.2: Understands and analyzes causal factors that have shaped major events in history).

## **Skills**

- **LT4:** Students will be able to communicate effectively in a group setting. (Practiced skill). (GLE: Communication 2.2: Uses interpersonal skills and strategies in a multicultural context to work collaboratively, solve problems and perform tasks).

## **Pre-Post Instruction Instruments**

There are two pre-post assessment instruments implemented in this unit. I will be using two different pre-post assessment instruments because different types of learning targets require different kinds of assessment methods (Stiggins, 2008, p.80). The first pre-post assessment instrument is a **selected response assessment**. This selected response assessment is aimed at assessing the knowledge and understanding learning targets regarding nationalism and imperialism—thus the selected response assessment is aimed at unit-level learning targets 1, 2, & 3. A selected response assessment is a tool allowing the teacher to sample mastery of elements of knowledge and understanding (Stiggins, 2008, p.81). Not only is a select response assessment complimentary to assessing content mastery, it is also efficient to administer in large numbers and permits a sample large enough to draw relatively confident generalizations (Stiggins, 2008, p.82). See attached for the selected response assessment. Answer key is marked on the copy of assessment in ink.

The data gathered from the selected response pre-post assessment will provide evidence on the students' mastery of knowledge and understanding related to imperialism and nationalism. The students' individual and collective achievement on the pre-assessment—their initial scores—will provide

a baseline indicating where student knowledge and understanding are at the beginning of the unit. I will record students' individual results on the selected response assessment as well as compile a class median for each class as a means of tracking collective class periods' knowledge and understanding. Individual and class-wide scores will help me to tailor my instruction as a means of better addressing students' knowledge and understanding instructional needs. In the post-assessment administered at the end of the unit I will, using the same selected response assessment, be able to determine students' individual and collective progress related to imperialism and nationalism knowledge and understanding. In essence, I will compare data gathered from the pre-assessment and compare it to that of the post-assessment. This comparison will be done at the individual and collective (class period) level. From the disparity between students' initial pre scores and after the unit post scores, I will be able to infer the amount of knowledge and understanding mastery achieved in the unit.

The second pre-post assessment instrument implemented within the unit is a **performance assessment**. This performance assessment is aimed at addressing the unit's skill target (LT4) concerned with students' ability to work cooperatively in social learning groups. It is worthwhile to note that while I have chosen to describe this skill target as a practiced skill, instruction on this skill has been relatively non-existent. By and large, students have been working together socially without much input and/or reflection on how to do this effectively. Thus, while students are used to working collaborative groups within their 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History class (and most likely some of their other classes), instruction regarding related collaborative skills has been sparse. This is not to say that students are, for lack of a better phrase, failing miserably; in many cases students are able to function collaboratively without problem. As a teacher observer, however, I have noticed there is much room for improvement in relation to students' social learning efforts. The objective of the unit is to better refine students practiced social learning skills.

Performance assessment is a good fit for measuring students' skill progression because it "provides a dependable means of evaluating skills as students are doing the things that reflect certain forms of achievement" (Stiggins, 2008, p.161). The performance assessment I'll be using has two instruments. In the pre-post assessment, I will be asking students in table groups (three to four students per table group) to collectively discuss and transcribe on a large sheet of construction paper their thoughts on two questions. Question 1: "What are the qualities of a productive group member?" Question 2: "What are the elements of a good functioning group?" The assessment tools used here will be teacher observation and students' creation of their response to the two questions. This triangulation of performance assessment analysis tools is aligned with Stiggins (2008) description of performance assessment wherein "performance assessment can be based either on observation of respondents as they are demonstrating the skills, or on the products created as a result of performing" (p. 77). I will be observing students' social skills on their discussion of social skills based on the attached rubric. I will also be looking for key terms identified and transcribed by students in their answering of the two questions. In all, I will be assessing students social skills related to LT 4 based on performance assessment observation AND a performance assessment product. In addition to my observation, I will also be video recording students' interaction during the performance assessment.

After explicit instruction on social skills in the unit, we will return to the same to questions and conduct the same activity wherein students will work together to record their thoughts on what makes a productive group member and an effective group. I will use the data gathered from the performance as recorded on the rubric from the pre-assessment as a way of measuring student progression by comparing it to the post-assessment performance rubric. In my appendix I have also included a list of key words and qualities exhibited by socially strong group members and groups. I will compare students' initial ability to identify these words/phrases to their post-unit abilities to identify these socially-significant characteristics/skills.

The pre-post performance assessment also provides students with the opportunity to be self-assessors. It is my plan to show students their initial discussion of the social skills related questions as well as their post-unit discussion performances at the end of the unit. It is the intention here that students will be able to identify some of the ways in which their social skills have increased over the course of the unit. Not only does it offer students the opportunity to reflect on their learning within the unit, it also enables them to identify ways in which they can continue to improve their social skills in the future. In this way, the videotaping of the performance will both provide students with the possible opportunity for celebration while simultaneously offering them a medium to identify how to improve their meeting of the social skills learning target.

### **Potential Sources of Bias**

In relation to the selected response assessment one possible source of bias is related to my ability to create a quality selected response assessment. Here it is my concern that my directions, wording, and actual test questions may be confusing, misleading or possibly overly-leading to students. In short, I am worried that my position as a novice creator and administrator of selected response assessments may skew the data. For example, it is possible that some of the questions on the selected response assessment pose to easy or leading for students on the pre-assessment. This is problematic in that the evidence that I have made a positive impact on learning will appear less significant and potentially less concrete. In order to try and minimize the bias related to this I followed Stiggins step-by-step directives outlining how to create a quality select response assessment. In creating the select response assessment, I made sure to outline well-conceived and clearly stated imperialism and nationalism propositions (Stiggins, 2008, p. 115). By creating propositions first, I have hoped to alleviate some of the possible sources of bias related to the pre-post selected response assessment.

Bias is also possible in the pre-post performance assessment related to students' ability to work well in group settings. A possible source of bias for this assessment related to students' table groups and general seating chart. If students are sitting at table groups with friends for either the pre or the post performance assessment, this will skew the students demonstration of social skills as assessed on the rubric. Similarly, the table group dynamics and their related ability to communicate effectively with one another will likely be linked to the amount of time spent in table groups. The logic here follows the longer students are at table groups together, the better able they are to communicate. Thus in administering the pre-post performance assessment, it is imperative that I try and simulate the same table group dynamics in both the pre-post assessment classroom scenarios. In order to simulate similar group dynamics and thus better control the possibility of socially related bias on each of the pre-post performance assessment days I will assign new table groups to students. In my new table group assignments, I will try and minimize placing best friends and/or clique members together. By assigning new seats each of the performance assessment days, I will attempt to eliminate any previous socially-established norms and/or dynamics. In essence, new seats and new table groups will help to maintain consistency in the social situations during both the pre- and the post-performance assessments.



**List of keywords to be identified during social skills performance assessment (performance assessment product)**

Productive group member:

- Good, active listener
- Cooperative
- Take turns
- Participates
- Stays on task
- Respectful
- Fulfills individual role
- Uses I-statements
- Culturally-sensitive

Functioning group:

- Takes turns
- Stays on tasks
- Assigns roles and/or adheres to assigned roles
- Works cooperatively
- Is sensitive to all group members' needs
- Looks like a groups—faces one another, positive body language
- Shares resources
- Resolves conflict in a positive manner
- Asks questions when confused